

The Angels we have heard on high

Les Anges, dans nos campagnes

CHOIX DE CANTIQUES (1842)

translated by JAMES CHADWICK (1813–1882)

The Angels we have heard on high,
Most sweetly singing o'er our plains,
And still the mountains in reply
Are echoing their joyous strains.

Chorus.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Say, shepherds, why this Jubilee?
Why thus your rapturous strain prolong?
What may the gladsome tidings be,
Which have inspired your heavenly song?
Chorus.—Gloria, &c.

Ah! come to Bethlehem, and see
The Babe whose birth the Angels sing;
Come and adore on bended knee,
The Infant Christ, the new born King.
Chorus.—Gloria, &c.

See Jesus in a manger laid,
’Tis He whom choirs of Angels praise,
Mary and Joseph lend your aid,
Our hearts in love to Jesus raise.
Chorus.—Gloria, &c.

English and Latin text: The Holy Family Hymns (London: Richardson & Son, 1860) via *Hymnology Archive*.

French and Latin text: Stanzas 1-3 from Choix de cantiques sur des airs nouveaux (Paris: Poussielgue-Rusand, 1842) via *Hymnology Archive*.

Original French and Latin (stanzas 1-3):

Les Anges, dans nos campagnes,
Ont entonné l’Hymne des Cieux;
Et l’écho de nos montagnes
Redit ce chant mélodieux:
Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Bergers, pour qui cette fête?
Quel est l’objet de tous ces chants?
Quel vainqueur? quelle conquête?
Mérite ces cris triomphants?
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Ils annoncent la naissance
Du libérateur d’Israël.
Et pleins de reconnaissance.
Chantent en ce jour solennel:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

What may the gladsome tidings be which have inspired: French “What vanquisher? what conquest merits”

Ah! come to Bethlehem... Our hearts in love to Jesus raise: The third and fourth stanzas in English very loosely approximate the sense of the third French stanza, which may be more literally translated:

They announce the birth
Of the liberator of Israel.
And full of gratitude
Sing on this solemn day:

Gloria in excelsis Deo: compare Luke 2:14 in the Vulgate, “Gloria in altissimis Deo,” both meaning “Glory to God in the highest.”